

TESTIMONIALS

IN FAVOUR OF

JAMES IRVING, M. D.



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JAMES IRVING, M. D.,

A CANDIDATE

FOR THE OFFICE OF

PHYSICIAN TO THE ROYAL LUNATIC ASYLUM
OF EDINBURGH.

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TO THE

MANAGERS OF THE ROYAL LUNATIC ASYLUM

OF EDINBURGH.

MORNINGSIDE, 28 September 1846.

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,—I beg leave to announce myself as a Candidate for the office of Physician to the Royal Lunatic Asylum; and, with your permission, I will briefly mention the grounds on which I have at length ventured to solicit the appointment.

Having received a classical education, I was for six years engaged in the study of literature and medicine in the University of Edinburgh. Towards the close of my academical studies, and after I had taken the degree of M. D. and received a surgeon's diploma, I enjoyed ample opportunities of practising my profession at the Royal Dispensary. For the last two years I have been attached to this Asylum, and have had the benefit of the able instructions of Dr Mackinnon, who always took great pleasure in imparting to his assistants a great variety of information as to the treatment of mental diseases, and the management of hospitals for the insane. For the above period, my reading has in a great measure been confined to works on insanity; and I have, besides, carefully perused the Case Books and other Records of this Asylum, so that I am acquainted with the history and character of most of the cases now in the house. During Dr Mackinnon's continued indisposition before he left the Asylum, his duties devolved upon me; and I may with some degree of confidence refer to his expressed opinion as to the mode in which those duties were discharged. Since his retirement in the month of May, I have had the whole charge and sole

responsibility as superintending Physician ; and I must leave it to the Managers who have visited the Asylum during that period, to say how I have conducted the business of the institution.

In the event of my being appointed to the office, with the duties of which I have thus had such opportunities of becoming familiar, I shall endeavour to merit your confidence by devoting my whole energies to the performance of those duties,—to do all in my power to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate, but to me most interesting class of patients under my care ; and, as much as in me lies, to advance the interests of an institution in which I cannot but feel great interest.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble Servant.

JAMES IRVING.

TESTIMONIALS.

I.

FROM WILLIAM MACKINNON, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and late Physician to the Royal Asylum, Edinburgh.

ABERDEEN, 10 September 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—I think that you have the strongest claims to the appointment of Physician to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum. You have acted as Assistant Physician for nearly two years, and performed the duties of the office to my entire satisfaction. For no inconsiderable period you have officiated as my substitute, and most fully justified the confidence reposed in you. In your intercourse with the patients, you have shown great kindness of disposition, united with discretion, and thereby secured their warm attachment to you. You have also displayed that firmness of mind which is necessary for securing the discipline of an Asylum. In the medical treatment of the patients, I ever found you judicious ; while, in the duties of recording and registering the medical experience of the Institution, I considered your services invaluable. Such patient industry as you have shown in your attention to the statistics of the Asylum, is rarely combined with those active habits of superintendence of the inmates, and of the economy of the household, which you have displayed. The same quality of mind has been eminently exhibited in your Bibliography of the Military Medical Literature of this country, of which the most competent of judges, Mr Marshall, will bear testimony. To your habits of orderly attention to all the other details which are so necessary for the successful working of an Asylum, I have been deeply indebted to you. I may add that I could ever depend on your ready co-operation as a colleague, and on your honourable and gentlemanly feelings as a friend.

I shall be glad if the Managers will apply to the office for which you are a Candidate, the principle which has been applied to all the

subordinate ones—that is, promotion where the Candidate, as in your case, is in every way qualified for it. With best wishes for your success, I remain very sincerely yours.

W. MACKINNON.

Dr Irving.

II.

From ALEXANDER GILLESPIE, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Consulting Physician to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum.

EDINBURGH, 24 September 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—It gives me much pleasure to be able to give my testimony to your high qualifications for the care and superintendence of the insane.

For nearly two years you have been the Assistant of our late highly qualified Superintendent, Dr Mackinnon, and since his lamented indisposition in January last, you have had nearly the whole charge of the Institution. I know well how much he valued your assistance, and from my own knowledge can testify to the ability you displayed in the care, and humane and judicious treatment of the unfortunate inmates of the Asylum. You have also active business habits, so necessary for any one who is to take charge of such an institution as that to which you are at present attached.—I am, my dear Sir, yours very truly.

A. GILLESPIE.

To Dr James Irving.

III.

From JOHN THURNAM, M.D., Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London, Medical Superintendent of the Retreat, near York.

YORK, 21 September 1846.

HAVING recently, on two occasions, availed myself of the opportunity of visiting the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, I had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted with Dr Irving, who kindly conducted me through the establishment, and explained to me its various details.

From the conversation I then had with Dr Irving, and from the opportunity I had of witnessing his kind but judicious manner in his intercourse with the patients, I have great pleasure in stating the high opinion I entertain of Dr Irving's moral and intellectual qualifications for any office to which he may (as a Physician) aspire in a public Asylum for the Insane.

JOHN THURNAM.

IV.

From the Rev. ROBERT LORIMER, Chaplain to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum.

THORNHILL, 15 September 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—I regret that on account of the early hour at which I was obliged to leave Edinburgh yesterday, I found it out of my power to write to you ; but I will not lose any more time in doing so.

It gives me much pleasure to bear testimony in your favour. I am well aware that you received an excellent education, and that your opportunities of instruction were not lost. To very high attainments of a professional kind, you have added a very correct and extensive knowledge of literature and science ; and I have reason to believe that your conduct has always been regulated by religious principle.

You have been much esteemed by the Patients in Morningside Asylum, ever since you came there, and your manner of dealing with them has uniformly been kind. The affairs of the house have been conducted with much prudence and quietness since the charge of it devolved upon you, and every thing has been arranged with great regularity. The ample opportunities I have had of observing the general management of the affairs of the house, enable me to express a distinct opinion upon those points, and to record my favourable testimony. Since you came to the Asylum, you have been alike assiduous and successful, evincing much decision of character, combined with great kindness of manner ; and the very judicious medical and moral treatment you have adopted has been made to subserve the interests of divine truth. You are well acquainted with the peculiar diseases to which your attention has principally been directed for some years, and the most approved means of cure ; and if you should be appointed

to the situation now vacant on account of the resignation of Dr Mackinnon, the late able and accomplished Superintendent of the Morning-side Institution, I sincerely trust that you will give ample satisfaction, by energy and ability in discharging the requisite duties. In short, your qualifications are such as would do credit to a very high and important place in society.—I remain, yours most truly.

ROBERT LORIMER.

Dr James Irving.

V.

FROM JOHN BENBOW, M.D., late Medical Assistant in the Royal
Edinburgh Asylum.

EDINBURGH. 24 September 1846.

MY DEAR IRVING,—I feel much pleasure in bearing testimony to the zeal and assiduity which you manifested in the discharge of the duties of Assistant Physician in the Asylum during my residence there. At this period, Dr Mackinnon was prevented by ill health from superintending the affairs of the Institution, which then devolved entirely upon you ; and I am confident these were discharged with every advantage to the Asylum and honour to yourself. Having been in daily and most frequent intercourse with you, and thus having had the best opportunities of knowing your professional abilities—which I necessarily often had to consult—I can speak with pleasure and confidence of your general knowledge of the profession, and your successful treatment and management of the Patients under your charge. Of the Patients themselves, I am sure you have the entire confidence and kindest wishes ; to whom you always behaved in the proper and double capacity of medical adviser and friend. I can also refer to the decision and firmness which you show in the management of the attendants ; an important feature in the qualification for the appointment to which you aspire ; and of your agreeable and conciliating manners to your coadjutors, I have a pleasing recollection.—Believe me, my dear Irving, very truly yours.

JOHN BENBOW.

Dr Irving.

VI.

From WILLIAM D. GILLESPIE, M.D., late Medical Assistant in the
Royal Edinburgh Asylum.

30, YORK PLACE, 21 September 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—Having acted as an Assistant at the Royal Edinburgh Asylum for three months last summer, I feel much pleasure in bearing testimony to the able and efficient manner in which you performed the duties of Resident Physician and Superintendent during the absence of Dr Mackinnon ; that you uniformly displayed unwearied zeal and assiduity in their performance ; and that in your intercourse with the Patients, you on all occasions showed much firmness of character, combined with great kindness of manner, which are so requisite in the management of the insane. Moreover, I consider you eminently qualified to fill the situation to which you now aspire, from the excellent opportunities you have enjoyed during a two years' residence in the Asylum, and from the devotedness with which you have prosecuted the study of mental diseases.—I remain, my dear Sir, very sincerely yours.

W. D. GILLESPIE.

Dr Irving.

VII.

From HENRY MARSHALL, Esq., F.R.S.E., Deputy Inspector-General
of Hospitals.

25, ALVA STREET, 26 September 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad to learn that you intend to become a Candidate for the appointment of Physician to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, and I feel much pleasure in bearing testimony to your general talents and professional attainments. Your work on the Progress of Military Medical Literature in this country is highly creditable to your industry, and evinces a very unusual acquaintance with the literature of your profession. You have had excellent opportunities of acquiring a practical knowledge of the general and special duties required of a Physician to an Asylum for the Insane, and I know that you

have zealously and perseveringly cultivated those opportunities. Should you succeed in obtaining the appointment to which you aspire, I have every confidence that you will execute the duties of the situation in question faithfully and well.—I remain, ever very truly yours.

HENRY MARSHALL.

Dr James Irving.

VIII.

FROM JAMES ANDREW, M.D. Cantab. F.R.S.E., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Physician to the Royal Infirmary.

38, MINTO STREET, 16th September 1846.

MY DEAR JAMES,—In reply to your application for an expression of my opinion respecting your fitness for the situation to which you now aspire, I feel great pleasure in stating that I have known you since you were a child ; that I also know that before you selected the profession to which you now belong, your mind had been well cultivated by a sound and liberal education in both the ancient and modern classics ; that after you had chosen Medicine as your profession, you pursued the study of it with zeal, diligence, and attention. About twelve months before you graduated, you became my Pupil in the Royal Dispensary, and continued so for many months—nearly eighteen I think. During that time, I had ample opportunities of forming an opinion of your professional abilities, which was most favourable to you. I found your discrimination of disease to be very good, and that you combined with it a very excellent qualification, viz. caution. That you are well qualified to fill such a situation as the one to which you aspire, I have no hesitation in affirming. The fact of your having been two years a Medical Assistant in the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, speaks for itself ; and the fact of your having had for several months past the sole charge of the Institution, ought to carry great weight with it in your favour in the opinion of the Managers. Heartily wishing you success, I remain, my dear Irving, yours very sincerely.

JAMES ANDREW.

IX.

From the Rev. WILLIAM STEVEN, D.D., Minister of Trinity College Church.

MEADOW LODGE, 25 September 1846.

It is with no common satisfaction that I bear testimony to the personal worth and professional excellence of Dr James Irving. His services, as one of the medical officers connected with the Royal Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum at Morningside, have, to my knowledge, been unremitting, and were highly appreciated by Dr Mackinnon, the late eminent resident Physician to the Institution. Repeatedly have I paid professional visits to the Asylum during the necessary absence of my friend, the Chaplain; and I have in consequence had an opportunity of witnessing and admiring the kind and winning, yet firm manner in which Dr Irving discharges his onerous and delicate duty. He appears to be much respected and greatly beloved by the numerous patients. With the exception of Dr Irving, I know not who the Candidates are for the important situation which Dr Mackinnon so ably and acceptably filled. I may however be permitted to state, that from all that has fallen directly under my own observation, and from the decided opinion I have heard expressed of Dr Irving's professional abilities by competent judges, I regard him, in every point of view, as peculiarly well fitted to take the direction of such an establishment as that in which he has now for the last two years so successfully laboured.

WM. STEVEN.

X.

To the Right Honourable the LORD PROVOST.

EDINBURGH, 28 September 1846.

MY LORD PROVOST,—I have before me a letter from Dr Mackinnon, stating in strong terms his opinions of the claims which Dr Irving has to the appointment of Physician to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum. This favourable opinion was no more than I expected. Dr Irving was for five years a pupil of my own, and was one of the best pupils

I ever had. He was distinguished, not more for solid parts than for unwearied industry even then, and for a warm feeling of all that was honourable and upright. I have since witnessed his career with pleasure, and a feeling akin to pride. His success in gaining the few distinctions which the University of Edinburgh bestows on the most worthy of her medical students, only followed out the honours he gained while at school ; and during the intimacy with him which I have for some time enjoyed, I have ever recognised the same honourable and upright bearing of which, when he was under my care, it was my delight to witness the early proofs.

I am not, of course, qualified to pronounce professionally on his peculiar fitness for the vacant office ; but I have been able, in my visits to the Asylum, to appreciate his judicious kindness of manner to the patients, and, from my own profession, to discover in his demeanour to the attendants, that firmness which secures the discharge of duty, and that courtesy which renders duty agreeable. Dr Irving is of the same age with Dr Mackinnon, when he commenced his labours in the Asylum ; and what he has already done in the literature of his profession excites high expectations, that in him humanity would find one who would alleviate mental disease, by casting fresh light upon its nature and remedies.

I have taken the liberty of writing to your Lordship on the subject, both from the interest I feel in Dr Irving, and from a strong desire that the usefulness and fame of so important an Institution connected with our city, may be maintained and extended.—I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servant.

W. M. GUNN,

ONE OF THE MASTERS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL.





















